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Nursing Homes Required to Have Smoke Detectors in Resident Rooms, Common Areas

DES MOINES, IOWA (February 13, 2006) – Nursing homes that are not fully sprinklered must have smoke detection systems in resident rooms and other common areas by May 24, 2006, according to a recent reminder issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Failure to comply with the federal requirement will be cited by the State Fire Marshal as part of a life safety code survey.

Last year, CMS published an interim final rule requiring smoke detectors to be installed in all resident rooms and public spaces in long term-care nursing facilities that are not protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system. The smoke detectors can be either single station battery operated, hard wired powered by the facility's electrical system or interconnected to the existing facility fire alarm system.

In its reminder to nursing homes, CMS said it expects that these battery powered smoke detectors will be installed, at a minimum, in all resident sleeping rooms and common areas such as dining rooms, activity rooms, meeting rooms where residents are located on a regular basis, and other areas in the facility where residents may gather together with other residents, visitors, and staff. Additional maintenance may be required such as cleaning on a regular basis, to ensure the detectors operate properly.

CMS further expects that facilities will keep records of all maintenance, testing and battery changing and have such records available at the time of any inspection. Facility fire plans may need to be modified and staff trained in response to the alarm from a smoke detector. It is expected that the staff shall respond to an alarm sounding from one of these detectors by activating the facility wide fire alarm system without delay.

All nursing homes that are not fully sprinklered are required to comply with this regulation. A waiver of this requirement cannot be granted due to the negative impact on the health and safety of the residents of the facility.

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Smoke detector hot notice

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